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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 HANOI 000839

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SUBJECT: PLANNING MINISTER AND HANO MAYOR REPRIMANDED BY VIETNAM'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE

REF: A) HANOI 686 B) HANOI 637

[11](#). (U) CLASIFIED BY DCM DENNIS HARTER;
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND(D).

[12](#). (C) SUMMARY: THREE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS --
MINISTER OF PLANNING AND INVESTMENT GIA, ANOI
PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN NGHIEN, AND BIN THUAN
PROVINCIAL PARTY CHIEF TRUNG -- WERE CENSURED FOR
MISMANAGEMENT AT THE 10-DAY PLENUM THAT ENDED APRIL

[19](#). ALL RETAIN THEIR POSITIONS FOR THE TIME BEING.
MOST OF THE PLENUM FOCUSED ON PREPARING THE OFFICIAL
DOCUMENTS FOR THE NINTH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS AT
THE END OF MARCH 2001. PART BRIEFERS SIGNALED THE
POLITICAL REPORT AND SOCIECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR THE
CONGRESS WOULD EMPHASIE THEMES RAISED BY GENERAL
SECRETARY PHIEU IN HIS 70TH ANNIVERSARY SPEECH,
INCLUDING THE PRIMACY OF THE STATE SECTOR IN VIETNAM'S
"MULTI-SECTOR, MARKET-ORIENTED SOCIALIST ECONOMY."
OVERALL THE PLENUM CONTINUED THE PARTY'S EMPHASIS ON
STABILITY AND INCREMENTAL ECONOMIC POLICY CHANGE, WITH
NO INDICATION OF ANY MAJOR REFORM STEPS PRIOR TO THE
PARTY CONGRESS. ONE BRIEFER, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE
BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT, SAID VIETNAM "NEEDED TO
TAKE SOME TIME TO CLARIFY SOME ISSUES." HIS COMMENTS
GAVE NO SUGGESTION THE CPV IS PREPARED TO MOVE FORWARD
ANYTIME SOON. END SUMMARY.

THREE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS CENSURED

[13](#). (U) THE NINTH CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM CONCLUDED
ITS TEN-DAY SESSION APRIL 19. MOST OF THE SESSION
FOCUSED ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE NINTH COMMUNIST PARTY
(CPV) CONGRESS, AND BRIEFINGS AT THE PLENUM'S
CONCLUSION EMPHASIZED THE DRAFTING OF KEY REPORTS FOR
THE CONGRESS (DETAILED BELOW). HOWEVER, THE BIG NEWS
OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE BY DAO DUY QUAT, DEPUTY
DIRECTOR OF THE CPV'S COMMISSION FOR IDEOLOGY AND
CULTURE, WAS THAT THREE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS
WOULD BE CENSURED FOR MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION, AS
PART OF THE PARTY'S ONGOING CAMPAIGN OF CRITICISM AND
SELF-CRITICISM.

[14](#). (U) IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, QUAT SAID
THAT TRAN XUAN GIA, MINISTER OF PLANNING AND

INVESTMENT, AND HOANG VAN NGHIEN, HANOI PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, HAD BEEN REPRIMANDED BY THEIR PEERS FOR THEIR ROLES IN THE SCANDAL-RIDDEN THANH LONG WATER PARK, AN ENTERTAINMENT CENTER BEING CONSTRUCTED IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF HANOI. THE TWO WERE GIVEN "REPRIMANDS" -- THE LOWEST OF THE PARTY'S FOUR FORMS OF PUNISHMENT. A PLENUM COMMUNIQUE SAID HANOI PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN NGHIEN ALSO WOULD BE GIVEN AN OFFICIAL REPRIMAND BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

15. (U) QUAT ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT DINH TRUNG, CHIEF OF THE BINH THUAN PROVINCIAL PARTY COMMITTEE, HAD RECEIVED A "WARNING" FROM THE PARTY -- WHICH IS ONE NOTCH MORE SEVERE THAN A REPRIMAND. TRUNG WAS WARNED FOR HIS RESPONSIBILITY IN DESTROYING UPSTREAM FORESTS AT TANH LANH AND FOR HIS FAILURE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OF INTERNAL "PARTY SOLIDARITY" IN THE PROVINCE. ALL THREE OFFICIALS RETAIN THEIR GOVERNMENT AND PARTY POSTS.

16. (C) THERE WAS NO INDICATION, EITHER IN THE COMMUNIQUE OR IN BRIEFINGS BY PARTY OFFICIALS, WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT OR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MAY CONSIDER FURTHER SANCTIONS AGAINST ANY OF THE THREE. IT IS POSSIBLE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION OPENING IN MAY MIGHT CONSIDER FURTHER SANCTIONS AGAINST GIA OR NGHIEN, THOUGH THE PARTY DID NOT RECOMMEND FURTHER ACTION IN THEIR CASES. (NOTE: THE REPRIMAND GIVEN TO GIA AND NGHIEN WAS LESS THAN THE WARNING GIVEN TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGO XUAN LOC AT LAST NOVEMBER'S PLENUM FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THANH LONG. AT THAT TIME, THE PLENUM ALSO RECOMMENDED THE ASSEMBLY REMOVE LOC FROM HIS POST AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, WHICH THE ASSEMBLY DID IN DECEMBER. END NOTE.)

17. (SBU) THE COMMUNIQUE SAID THE CENSURE STEPS WERE TAKEN BY THE PLENUM AS PART OF THE SECOND PHASE OF THE PARTY'S CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM CAMPAIGN, WHICH FOCUSED ON PARTY MEMBERS HOLDING HIGH-RANKING GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. THE TWO-YEAR-LONG CAMPAIGN, WHICH WILL CONTINUE UNTIL MAY 2001, WILL NOW MOVE INTO ITS THIRD AND FINAL PHASE -- COVERING ORDINARY PARTY MEMBERS AT LOCAL LEVELS. (COMMENT: BECAUSE THE PLENUM HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE SECOND PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN HAS CONCLUDED, THIS SUGGESTS THERE WILL NOT BE OTHER HIGH-LEVEL PARTY MEMBERS CENSURED BY THE PARTY. END COMMENT.)

18. (C) ONE SURPRISE IN THESE DECISIONS WAS THAT LONG-TIME CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT NGUYEN CONG TAN WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE GROUP OF THOSE CENSURED. TAN HAS BEEN WIDELY CRITICIZED IN THE PRESS FOR HIS ROLE IN THE THANH LONG WATER PARK; HE AGREED TO THE ACQUISITION OF THE LAND FOR THE PARK. THE CONSENSUS AROUND HANOI IS THAT TAN WILL BE ALLOWED TO "RETIRE" BEFORE OR AT THE PARTY CONGRESS. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE LE HUY NGO, WHO SUCCEEDED TAN AS MINISTER 18 MONTHS AGO, REPORTEDLY IS BURNISHING HIS PARTY CREDENTIALS IN AN EFFORT TO SUCCEED TAN AS DEPUTY PM. NGO IS WIDELY SEEN AS A PARTY INSIDER WITH NARROW PARTY POLITICAL INTERESTS. DURING HIS TENURE THE MINISTRY HAS BECOME LESS ABLE TO ATTRACT DIRECT FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE.

DRAFT PARTY DOCUMENTS EMPHASIZE HACKNEYED IDEOLOGY

19. (U) THE PLENUM'S PRIMARY FOCUS WAS DISCUSSING THE DOCUMENTS BEING PREPARED FOR THE PARTY CONGRESS, WHICH QUAT SAID WOULD BE HELD AT THE END OF MARCH 2001. DURING THE PLENUM SESSION, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS DISCUSSED AND MADE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE THEMES OF THE POLITICAL REPORT, THE SOCIOECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR 2001-2010, THE FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC PLAN FOR 2001-2005, THE REPORT ON REVISING THE PARTY STATUTES, AND A REPORT ON PERSONNEL IN THE COMMUNIST

PARTY. THE PLENUM APPOINTED DRAFTING COMMITTEES AND TASKED THEM WITH COLLECTING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERS AT ALL LEVELS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, WITH THE GOAL OF HAVING MORE POLISHED DRAFT DOCUMENTS TO PRESENT TO THE NEXT PLENUM MEETING IN JUNE.

¶10. (SBU) THE PLENUM COMMUNIQUE SAID VIETNAM'S DEVELOPMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE BASED ON THE TWIN PILLARS OF "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SOCIALISM." THE DRAFT DOCUMENTS BEING PREPARED NOTE VIETNAM WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE A "MULTI-SECTOR, MARKET-ORIENTED SOCIALIST ECONOMY." (COMMENT: AN OXYMORON IF EVER THERE WAS ONE. END COMMENT.) THE DOCUMENTS ALSO WILL SPELL OUT THE NEXT STAGES OF THE COUNTRY'S MODERNIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION, THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND INTEGRATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SECURITY, AND THE NEED TO STREAMLINE PARTY AND STATE STRUCTURES. THESE TOPICS HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT THEMES ON WHICH PM KHAI, PRESIDENT LUONG AND PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU HAVE EXPRESSED HANOI'S MORE IDEOLOGICAL VIEWS IN RECENT MONTHS (REFTELS).

¶11. (U) IN SEPARATE BRIEFINGS TO THE PRESS BY QUAT AND TO DIPLOMATS BY DEPUTY HEAD OF CPV EXTERNAL AFFAIRS PHAM VAN CHUONG, THE PARTY SPOKESPERSONS OUTLINED THE MAIN THEMES AND IDEAS DISCUSSED. BOTH QUAT AND CHUONG NOTED THAT GENERAL SECRETARY LE KHA PHIEU'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY SPEECH WAS EMPHASIZED IN PREPARING THE DRAFTS FOR THE KEY PARTY DOCUMENTS (DETAILED REFTELS). LIKE PHIEU'S SPEECH, THE SOCIOECONOMIC DOCUMENTS STRESS THAT ALL ECONOMIC SECTORS -- PUBLIC SECTOR, COOPERATIVES, PRIVATE SECTOR, INDIVIDUAL MARKET SECTOR, AND STATE MARKET SECTOR (PRESUMABLY SOE'S) -- ARE EQUAL, THOUGH THE PUBLIC AND COOPERATIVE SECTORS HAVE SPECIAL ROLES IN ENSURING STABILITY AND PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND THESE VALUES MUST ALWAYS BE PROMOTED.

¶12. (C) THE PLENUM COMMUNIQUE AND BRIEFINGS BY QUAT AND CHUONG PROVIDED FURTHER INDICATION THAT ANY ECONOMIC POLICY CHANGES WILL BE VERY GRADUAL AND MEASURED; THERE WAS NOTHING TO SUGGEST ANY DRAMATIC STEPS FORWARD ARE ON THE NEAR-TERM HORIZON. CHUONG REFERRED TO PHIEU'S COMMENTS EARLIER IN THE DAY TO A VISITING SINGAPORE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AS ILLUSTRATIVE; PHIEU SAID VIETNAM RECOGNIZES IT MUST "REARRANGE STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES" (SOE'S) BUT THIS NEEDS TO BE DONE WHILE "TAKING INTO ACCOUNT" UNEMPLOYMENT, SINCE IF REFORM IS NOT PROPERLY DONE, SOCIAL PROBLEMS WILL RESULT. (COMMENT: FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, VIETNAM'S CENTRALLY LED "MARKET-ORIENTED SOCIALIST ECONOMY" IS NOT PURSUING MEANINGFUL SOE AND OTHER MACROECONOMIC REFORM BECAUSE THE CONCERNS ABOUT SOCIAL FALLOUT TRUMP THE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY THE REFORMS. STABILITY CONTINUES TO BE THE WATCHWORD OF THE DAY. END COMMENT.)

¶13. (C) PLAYING KEY ROLES AT THE PLENUM WERE GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU, WHO AS ALWAYS DELIVERED THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS OPENING THE PLENUM AND PRESIDED OVER THE SESSION, AND HANOI PARTY CHIEF NGUYEN PHU TRONG. TRONG, WHO UNTIL FEBRUARY WAS IN CHARGE OF IDEOLOGICAL MATTERS FOR THE PARTY, BRIEFED THE PLENUM ON ITS FIRST DAY ON THE DOCUMENTS TO BE PREPARED FOR THE PARTY CONGRESS. TRONG, WHO IS ONE OF THE MORE STRONGLY IDEOLOGICAL POLITBURO MEMBERS, LIKELY WILL PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN OVERSEEING THE DRAFTING OF THESE DOCUMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE POLITICAL REPORT. TRONG APPEARS TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE OF PHIEU, AND HE LIKELY WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE PARTY CONGRESS.

NOTHING NEW ON THE BTA

¶14. (SBU) DURING THE QUESTION PERIOD, CHUONG WAS ASKED BY THE BRITISH EMBASSY POLOFF WHETHER VIETNAM WAS PREPARED TO MOVE FORWARD ON THE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT (BTA) WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER ECONOMIC REFORM STEPS SUCH AS THOSE PRESCRIBED BY THE IMF AND REQUIRED FOR WTO ACCESSION. ACCORDING TO HIS INTERPRETED RESPONSE, CHUONG SAID, "WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO CLARIFY SOME ISSUES BEFORE SIGNING THE AGREEMENT." HE SAID IT WOULD BE EASY FOR VIETNAM TO SIGN IT AND THEN NOT BE ABLE TO REALIZE IT. "BUT WE WANT TO SIGN IT AND IMPLEMENT IT, AND THUS WE MUST UNDERSTAND IT AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT." HE SAID VIETNAM IS "BRAND NEW" TO NEGOTIATING SUCH AGREEMENTS, AND "WE HOPE THE U.S. SIDE, AS ONE WHO HAS MUCH MORE EXPERIENCE (THAN WE), WILL BE KIND ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND IT (OUR LACK OF EXPERIENCE) AND SOLVE THIS PROBLEM."

¶15. (C) COMMENT: CHUONG IS NOT A MAJOR PLAYER IN BTA NEGOTIATIONS, AND HIS STATEMENTS WERE STANDARD BOILERPLATE. HIS COMMENTS DID NOT SUGGEST THERE IS ANY MOVEMENT WITHIN THE PARTY ON THE BTA; RATHER, HE SEEMED TO SUGGEST THAT "TAKING SOME TIME TO CLARIFY SOME ISSUES" MAY GO ON FOR A LONG TIME. HIS COMMENTS CLOSELY TRACK SIMILAR POINTS MADE BY SENIOR GVN OFFICIALS OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS. END COMMENT.

DISCUSSIONS ON PARTY RESTRUCTURING

¶16. (U) DURING THE PLENUM THERE WERE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT RESTRUCTURING ROLES WITHIN THE POLITBURO. IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, QUAT BRIEFED THAT THE PLENUM DISCUSSED THREE PROPOSALS FOR RESTRUCTURING THE POLITBURO'S FIVE-MEMBER STANDING COMMITTEE AND PERHAPS REPLACING IT WITH AN EIGHT-MEMBER SECRETARIAT. (NOTE: PRIOR TO THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS, THE POLITBURO HAD A SECRETARIAT TO HELP SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE PARTY. END NOTE.) QUAT SAID ONE PROPOSAL WAS TO MAINTAIN THE STANDING COMMITTEE, BUT HAVE THE GROUP APPOINTED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND REPORTING DIRECTLY TO THE GENERAL SECRETARY, RATHER THAN APPOINTED BY THE POLITBURO. THE SECOND PROPOSAL WAS TO REPLACE THE STANDING COMMITTEE WITH A SECRETARIAT. THE THIRD PROPOSAL WAS TO MAINTAIN THE STANDING COMMITTEE BUT TO ADD A SECRETARIAT. QUAT SAID THESE ISSUES WILL BE FURTHER DISCUSSED AT THE TENTH PLENUM IN JUNE. (COMMENT: THESE VARYING PROPOSALS SUGGEST THE POLITBURO IS NOT ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH ITS WORKLOAD AND IS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE ITS EFFICIENCY. END COMMENT)

¶17. (SBU) CHUONG WAS ASKED WHETHER THE PLENUM DISCUSSED A PROPOSAL TO COMBINE THE ROLES OF COMMUNIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY AND STATE PRESIDENT. (NUMEROUS SOURCES SUGGEST LE KHA PHIEU HAS BEEN EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSUMING THE MANTLE OF PRESIDENT AS WELL, SO HE CAN BENEFIT FROM THE PROTOCOL RANK OF HEAD OF STATE, IN ACCORD WITH HIS PREEMINENT POLITICAL POWER. THIS HAS PROVEN AWKWARD FOR PHIEU IN SEVERAL OF HIS FOREIGN TRAVELS, WHEN HE FEELS HE HAS NOT BEEN RECEIVED AT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL.) CHUONG CLAIMED THIS ISSUE WAS NOT DISCUSSED AT THE PLENUM. (NOTE: HOWEVER, HE ALSO FLATLY TOLD ONE DIPLOMATIC QUESTIONER THERE WERE NO DISCIPLINARY STEPS TAKEN AT THE PLENUM. END NOTE.) CHUONG WENT ON TO SUGGEST THIS MAY BE CONSIDERED AT THE CONGRESS, THOUGH HE POINTED OUT THAT ONLY HO CHI MINH HAS HELD BOTH OF THESE POSITIONS CONCURRENTLY.

SMALL PROTESTS OUTSIDE PARTY HEADQUARTERS

¶18. (SBU) FOR TWO DAYS WHILE THE PLENUM WAS MEETING, APRIL 18 AND 19, A GROUP OF ABOUT 30 VIETNAMESE BRIEFLY HELD WHAT HAVE BEEN TERMED BY THE FOREIGN

PRESS AS "STREET DEMONSTRATIONS" OUTSIDE PARTY HEADQUARTERS. ON APRIL 18, THE GROUP, FROM THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF DONG THAP, HELD UP A BANNER THAT READ, "PEOPLE FROM SA DEC TOWN, DONG THAP PROVINCE ARE DEPRESSED. NO DEMOCRACY." AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR, THE GROUP DISPERSED; WITNESSES DID NOT REPORT ANY ARRESTS OR HARASSMENT BY PLAINCLOTHES POLICE. THE NEXT DAY, ABOUT 30 DEMONSTRATORS FROM DONG THAP AGAIN GATHERED. THIS TIME THEIR BANNERS READ: "DOWN WITH CORRUPTED PEOPLE" AND "LONG LIVE THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM."

¶19. (C) COMMENT: IN THIS CONTROLLED SOCIETY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW THE MOTIVE OF THESE DEMONSTRATORS AND WHETHER IN FACT THEIR PROTEST WAS GENUINE. DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT OF CPV HEADQUARTERS ARE RARE, ESPECIALLY AROUND A KEY PARTY MEETING. BUT THESE ACTIVITIES ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE TAKEN BY GROUPS WHICH OCCASIONALLY GATHER NEAR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE OFFICE AND RESIDENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO PROTEST PERSONAL OR LOCAL CONCERNS, OFTEN INVOLVING LAND USE RIGHTS OR CORRUPTION. END COMMENT.

¶20. (U) WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE PROTESTS, CHUONG MENTIONED THAT PETITIONS AND COMPLAINTS REGARDING LAND USE, CORRUPTION AND RED TAPE ARE OFTEN RAISED AT GRASSROOTS LEVELS. HE OPINED THESE CONCERNS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED AT THE GRASSROOTS. AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL, THERE IS AN APPROPRIATE OFFICE TO ADDRESS SUCH CONCERNS. BUT HE SAID THE PLENUM ITSELF SHOULD NOT INVOLVE ITSELF IN SUCH LOCAL COMPLAINTS.

COMMENT: MUDDLING THROUGH ON IDEOLOGICAL MANTRAS

¶21. (C) THE CENSURE OF GIA, NGHIEN AND TRUNG SHOWS THE PARTY'S CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM CAMPAIGN CONTINUES TO HAVE SOME TEETH IN IT. GIA AND NGHIEN, IN PARTICULAR, HAD BEEN RUMORED TO BE IN LINE FOR REBUKE FOR SOME TIME, THOUGH DEPUTY PM TAN IS A CURIOUS OMISSION FROM THIS ROGUES GALLERY. NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, THE TIRED MARXIST MANTRAS TELEGRAPHED FOR THE KEY DOCUMENTS OF NEXT YEAR'S COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS ARE DISCOURAGING. THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S INCREASING RELIANCE ON OLD-LINE DOGMA IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THERE IS ROOM IN THIS MIX FOR PROGRESS ON THE REFORM AGENDA OR A COMMITMENT TO SIGN THE BTA. FOR THE MOMENT THE SIGNS ARE NOT POSITIVE. END COMMENT.
PETERSON

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